



# NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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Raised Bill 972: An Act Concerning Crisis Intervention Training For Police Officers  
And Collaboration Between Police And Social Workers  
Public Safety and Security Committee  
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Submitted by: Stephen Wanczyk-Karp, LMSW

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter representing over 2,300 members, we support raised bill 972, with a suggested revision. This bill recognizes the critical importance of crisis intervention training for police officers and the growing usage of social workers by police departments.

Section 2 of 972 calls upon the Police Officer and Training Council (POST) to examine programs and strategies used for collaboration of police officers with social workers. Such collaborations are expanding in Connecticut, with a steady increase in municipal police departments that successfully utilize social workers. Such utilization includes direct hire of police social workers, contracting with a community-based organization to bring in social workers to respond to mental health calls, and development of separate civilian response teams outside of the police department. Each of these models have in common the successful use of social workers to respond to 911 calls that are related to mental health, substance abuse and societal problems.

Social workers have extensive training in working with diverse populations, are problem solvers, experts in de-escalation, and through a “person-in-environment” approach assist individuals and families to resolve societal problems. Social workers are aware of community resources and know how to access them. Social workers are advocates for clients in a way that creates trust and supportive relationships. These are the types of skills that make for successful engagement within the community. Just as police officers are experts in addressing issues of law enforcement, social workers are experts in resolving social problems that bring individuals into encounters with the police. Formal and informal connections between police and social workers is a recipe for improved outcomes for certain 911 calls.

We urge the Public Safety Committee to pass this bill with one revision. The bill calls upon POST to issue guidance to law enforcement units that includes

recommendations of how police officers may collaborate with social workers. NASW/CT asks that such guidance be in consultation with the profession of social work and asks that the National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter be involved in the development of such guidance. We do not see how POST can offer guidance without consultation from the profession of social work.